

## Message Text

SECRET

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10  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 /026 W  
----- 063951

R 070810Z MAR 75  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2869  
INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
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AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

S E C R E T DAMASCUS 0851

EXDIS

BEIRUT PASS BAGHDAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, SY, IZ  
SUBJECT: DAMASCUS-BAGHDAD RELATIONS

REF: BAGHDAD 0229

1. PRIOR RECEIPT REFTEL HAS OPPORTUNITY REVIEW WITH  
MINDEFENSE COS SHIHABI MARCH 5 STATE OF SYRO-IRAQI  
RELATIONS. WE COVERED DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER HAYDAR'S  
PUBLIC CRITICISM OF IRAQI BAATH, BEIRUT PRESS REPORTS  
IN WHICH BAGHDAD ACCUSED DAMASCUS OF ASSISTING KURDS  
AND BAGHDAD MEDIA'S HARSH ATTACK ON ASAD FOR BEING  
READY TO SIGN PEACE TREATY WITH ISRAEL IN RETURN  
FOR RESTORATION OF GOLAN HEIGHTS.

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2. SHIHABI SMILINGLY OBSERVED THAT THIS EXCHANGE

OF INSULTS BETWEEN THE TWO CAPITALS HAD BECOME ANNUAL RITUAL, CENTERED AROUND THE FEB 23 SYRIAN BAATH (1966) ANNIVERSARY. THIS WAS NOW A HALLOWED OCCASION OF REOPENING OLD WOUNDS BUT, SHIHABI CONTINUED, SYRIA HAD MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DO THAN RESPOND TO VERY IRAQI ACCUSATION. SHIHABI DOUBTED THERE WOULD BE ANY OFFICIAL REACTION TO BAGHDAD'S LATEST ATTACK ON ASADWT SYRIA WOULD LIMIT ITSELF TO TAUNTS ABOUT THE IRAQI BAATH ALREADY MADE IN HAYDAR'S FEB 23 SPEECH TO PARTY FAITHFUL IN DAMASCUS.

3. SHIHABI ADDED THAT SARG CONSIDERED THE IRAQI INTERNAL SITUATION UNSTABLE AND THE POSITION EVEN OF SADAM HUSSEIN TO BE UNCERTAIN. IRAQI CRITICISM OF SYRIA HAD TO BE READ AGAINST THE BACKGROUND OF IRAQ'S INTERNAL PROBLEMS. IN ANY EVENT, HE CONCLUDED, IRAQ HAS NO CAPABILITY TO MAKE PROBLEMS FOR SYRIA.

4. ALGERIAN AMBASSADOR TO DAMASCUS OSMAN SAADI, RECENTLY TRANSFERRED HERE FROM BAGHDAD, TELLS ME HE PERSONALLY FINDS IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT SYRIA IS FURNISHING TANGIBLE ASSISTANCE TO KURDISH REBELS IN IRAQ. TOP SYRIAN OFFICIALS HAVE FLATLY DENIED THIS TO HIM. HE UNABLE RECONCILE THESE ASSERTIONS WITH THOSE OF IRAQI LEADERS WHO HAVE ASSURED HIM THEY HAD SEVERAL "PROOFS" THAT SYRIA WAS ARMING THE REBELS.

5. ALGERIAN ADDED THAT LATEST ROUND OF CRITICISM HAD BEEN TOUCHED OFF BY SYRIA'S DELIBERATE OMISSION OF BAGHDAD FROM CAPITALS VISITED BY FONMIN KHADDAM TO EXPLAIN KISSINGER'S FEB 13 VISIT HERE. HE NOTED THAT THE EGYPTIANS IN ACCORDANCE WITH A LONGSTANDING POLICY OF KEEPING BAGHDAD AND DAMASCUS FROM COMBINING AGAINST CAIRO'S INTERESTS MAY HAVE DELIBERATELY CONTRIBUTED TO IRAQI SENSE OF IRRITATION WITH SYRIANS BY SENDING ASHARF MARWAN TO BAGHDAD IN LATE FEBRUARY TO DISCUSS EGYPTIAN PEACE POLICIES.

6. COMMENT: WE RECALL THAT IN EARLY 1960S PHASE  
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OF THE KURDISH REBELLION, SYRIA WAS ACCUSED OF GIVING SANCTUARY TO KURDISH REBELS FLEEING FROM IRAQ ATTACKS. WE UNDERSTAND THAT THERE ARE CLOSE BLOOD TIES BETWEEN SYRIAN KURDS IN NORTHEAST OF THIS COUNTRY AND IRAQI KURDS. WITH OR WITHOUT DAMASCUS ENCOURAGEMENT SUCH FAMILIES WOULD FEEL OBLIGED TO SHELTER KURDISH REFUGEES.  
MURPHY

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NNN

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